

A Year of Reuse Activities & Ideas

Here are a few ideas Green Teams teachers and others have used.
Find additional activities to measure and reduce classroom waste at metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/elementaryschool/guides.asp.
Send your ideas and projects to greenteam@triangleassociates.com.

September

Set Up for a Year of Reuse

Using a cardboard box, set up a classroom reuse bin that students can draw from throughout the year. Create separate boxes for single-sided paper and construction paper. Have students label and decorate the boxes with samples of the paper that go inside. Brainstorm with students a list of ways to reuse paper throughout the year. Keep track of how much paper the class saves.

Materials • Cardboard box large enough to hold full sheets of paper • Paper scraps • Scissors • Glue

October

Party Place Mats

Cut clean orange juice and milk cartons or cereal boxes into strips, and students can weave these into colorful place mats to keep their desks clean during class parties. Glue ends or weave dental floss around the edges to keep strips secure. Beverage cartons are more water resistant and can easily be wiped clean. To find easy directions for this project, type in "make a place mat" on wikihow.com.

Materials • Two cereal boxes or two half-gallon juice or milk cartons washed clean • Scissors • Dental floss or glue

November

Patchwork Geometry Cards

Using scraps of construction paper, old magazines or calendars, wrapping paper, or any colorful paper, have students cut out triangles, squares, rectangles, pentagons, or other geometric shapes. Students can then glue these in patchwork designs to make gift or greeting cards. Use another sheet or page to make an envelope. Get directions for making an envelope or a self-mailing sleeve at metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/elementaryschool/guides.asp.

Materials • Scrap paper • Scissors • Glue

December

Wrapping Paper

Never buy wrapping paper again! Comics, newspaper, and old grocery bags can make delightful gift wrap or gift bags. Decorate brown paper with paint and shapes cut out of old sponges. Challenge older students to figure out how to make gift bags following the design used in paper bags or using their own creativity. Decorate bags with flowers and other trimmings made of paper.

Materials • Old poster paper, paper grocery bags, comics or newspaper • Scrap paper • Glue • Scissors • Old sponges/paint • Colored markers



January

Twig Booklets and Pads

No need to use new paper for journals, lists, and notes. Use scrap paper to make booklets and pads. Use last year's calendar to make a sturdy cover for the booklet. Staple the top to make a pad. To make a twig booklet, make two holes at the top of the pages, slightly shorter than the length of the twig. Insert the ends of the rubber band through the holes. Slide the twig into the loops at each end of the rubber band. Get the full instructions at metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/elementaryschool/guides.asp.

Materials • Paper used on one side • Old calendar or magazine • Stapler for pad • Hole punch, twig, and rubber band for twig booklet • Scissors

February

Valentine's Day Pop-up Cards

Challenge students to celebrate a Waste-Free Valentine's Day by using old calendars and scrap paper to make their own cards. Make wild or beautiful envelopes to match! Simple directions to make a Valentine pop-up card can be found at robertsabuda.com/popmakeheart1.html.

Materials • Scrap paper • Scissors • Glue

March

Book Exchange

Reuse isn't just about paper! Sponsor a classroom, grade level, or school-wide book exchange. Donate leftover books to the library or a children's shelter.

Materials • Books • Rubber stamp and scrap paper to record book credits

April

Grocery Bags with a Message

Celebrate Earth Day by decorating and reusing paper grocery bags with messages to reuse and save paper. Many grocery stores encourage students to decorate bags and return them to the store to share with the community. Have a contest to see how many times you can use a bag before it falls apart! Get more information or send your results to the grocery bag project at earthdaybags.org.

Materials • Grocery bags • Crayons or colored markers

May

Personalized Flowers

Making picture frames out of cardboard and scrap paper is also a fun way to reuse paper and make a great gift tag. Use milk cartons to grow flowers. Free flower seeds can be found on the web or through local nurseries or garden clubs. When the flowers are growing, students can glue their picture frames onto a stick and make a gift card for Mom or a friend to go in the pot.

Materials • Shoebox or other cardboard • Scrap paper • Glue • Milk cartons • Dirt • Seeds • Sticks

June

Celebrating Reuse

As the school year comes to a close, celebrate your year of reuse. Try to use up any leftover materials for those final projects. Recycle what you can't use.

Remember the chart you started in September? Review the different ways students reused paper over the year. Was it hard? How many trees did you save? Discuss other ways of reusing. Identify places to donate school clothes and supplies that are no longer needed.

Why Reuse?

Reusing is a simple way to save natural resources before recycling. The more use we get out of a piece of paper, a plastic container, a milk carton, the less we need to buy. The savings go beyond just the material used, but include all the energy needed to make, transport, and sell the product. Because schools generate a huge amount of paper, the Year of Reuse focuses mostly on paper projects.

Other ways to reuse include

- using durable materials instead of disposables.
- encouraging the use of reusable containers for lunch and snacks.
- saving party decorations from year to year.
- giving experiences instead of stuff.
- making old things new with some paint and glue.
- donating the things no longer needed, instead of throwing them away.

